

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 7-29 were examined in the Office Action of November 3, 2006.

Claims 7-18, 20-22, 24 and 26-29 were rejected as being obvious over the combination of Inoue et al. in view of Hasebe et al. and Wen. Claims 19 and 23 were rejected over the foregoing references, and further in view of Jagannathan et al.

Of these, claims 9-10, 14-16, 20, 24, 25 and 27 are being canceled; and claims 7, 17 and 21 are being amended.

Claims 17 and 21 are being amended to recite additional features of the developing and replacing units, including the features of their respective dependent claims 20 and 24, which are being canceled.

Claim 25 and dependent claims

Claim 25 was not rejected over any prior art. Claim 7 is being amended to include the features of claim 25, which is being canceled. Allowance of claim 7 and its dependent claims 8, 11-13 and 26 is therefore in order.

Claims 17-19 and 28

The invention described in amended claim 17 is characterized in that a plurality of developing units perform different developing processes, including an alkaline developing process in an alkaline developing unit and an organic developing process in an organic developing unit, respectively. The different liquid component is adhered to the developed substrate with respect to each developing unit after different developing solution and different rinse liquid are supplied to the substrate with respect to each developing unit.

And so, in the invention of claim 17, the respective developing units replace the liquid component finally adhered to the substrate with a replacing solution (which has a composition which is different from that of the rinse liquid) common to plural developing units after developing by a developing solution and rinsing by a rinse liquid. Therefore, when transporting the substrate from the respective developing units to a high-pressure processing unit, the substrate is wetted by the common replacing solution without regard to which developing unit is used for the developing process. Accordingly, the substrate can be transported by a transport unit common to plural developing units.

On the contrary, even though two or more developing units (wet processing apparatus 1) are provided in Inoue et al. (paragraph 27), Inoue et al. never suggests that the plurality of developing units include respective units which perform different developing processes, including an alkaline developing unit and an organic developing unit.

In addition, according to the wet processing apparatus 1 in Inoue et al., only developing by a developing solution and rinsing by a rinse liquid are performed, and there is no disclosure of a replacing process, in which a liquid component adhered to a substrate is replaced with a replacing solution common to plural developing units.

Therefore, even though the plurality of developing units perform different developing processes (such as the alkaline developing process and the organic developing process) in Inoue et al., a different liquid component must be adhered to the substrate with respect to each developing unit. Accordingly, as described in Hasebe et al., in a case where a transport unit as in Inoue et al. will be able to access the plurality of developing units, it is necessary to provide special transport units corresponding to the individual processing contents (e.g., an alkaline-development transport unit and an organic-development transport unit).

On the contrary, according to the invention of claim 17, the liquid component finally adhered to the substrate is replaced with the replacing solution common to the plural developing units, whether developed by the alkaline developing unit or developed by the organic developing unit. Therefore, it is possible to transport the substrate by a common transport unit.

Claims 22-24 and 29

The invention described in amended claim 21 is characterized in that a plurality of developing units perform different developing processes, including an alkaline developing process in an alkaline developing unit and an organic developing process in an organic developing unit, respectively, as in the case of the invention described above in claim 17. The different liquid component is adhered to the developed substrate with respect to each developing unit after different developing solutions and different rinse liquids are supplied to the substrate with respect to each respective developing unit.

And so, in the invention of claim 21, a replacing unit replaces the liquid component adhered to the substrate with a replacing solution (which has a composition which is different

from that of the rinse liquid) common to plural developing units, after the respective developing units, perform developing by a developing solution and rinsing by a rinse liquid. Accordingly, the substrate can be transported to a high-pressure processing unit by a transport unit common to plural developing units.

On the contrary, even though two or more developing units (wet processing apparatus 1) are provided in Inoue et al. (paragraph 27), Inoue et al. never suggests that the plurality of developing units include respective units which perform different developing processes, including an alkaline developing unit and an organic developing unit.

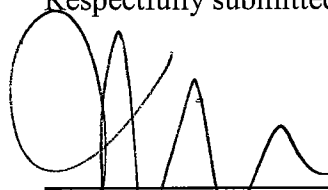
In addition, note that the vessel 6, associated with a liquid supply apparatus in Inoue et al., merely supplies a protecting liquid (deionized water) to a substrate, only for preventing the substrate from drying. Therefore, even if a plurality of developing units which perform different developing process (alkaline developing unit and organic developing unit) were provided in Inoue et al., Inoue et al. still would never suggest using a replacing solution and a transport unit common to these plural developing units.

In view of the foregoing, allowance of claims 7, 8, 11-13, 17-19, 21-23, 26, 28 and 29 is requested.

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